

# Instructions for Assigning Scores and Comments

## National Leadership Grant Panel Review

### Summary

- Access the applications assigned to you by clicking on a link provided in an email message from your IMLS primary contact.
- Enter one whole-number score and one set of comments for each application through the IMLS Online Reviewer System.
- National Leadership Grant panel review uses a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high).
- Write a constructive and substantive comment of between 30 and 2000 characters in length for each criterion: Goals, Implementation, and Results.
- Your comments and the numeric score you provide for the application should align with each other.
- Address your comments to the applicant, not to IMLS.

### Step-by-Step Instructions

#### 1. Access Applications

Use the link provided to you in an email message from your IMLS primary contact to access the entire group of applications that your panel will review along with the field review comments and scores for each application. The same email message included a list of applications specifically assigned to you. Save at least the applications assigned to you (and more if you wish) to your computer in a secure place that is not accessible to others. Call or email your IMLS primary contact immediately if any applications are missing or if you cannot open them.

**Confidentiality in IMLS Peer Review:** The information contained in grant applications is strictly confidential. Do not discuss or reveal names, institutions' project activities, or any other information contained in the applications.

#### 2. Access the IMLS Online Reviewer System

Use the following link to access to the IMLS Online Reviewer System:

<https://e-services.imls.gov/grantapps/reviewers.aspx>

To login, enter the email address you have on file with IMLS, and use the default password: **password**. An **E-Review Security Screen** will appear. Read this page and click **OK**. Next, create a user account and establish your own password.

## Technology Issues

**Browsers:** Microsoft Internet Explorer® is the only reliable Web browser that will successfully work with the IMLS Online Reviewer System. Unfortunately, the system is not compatible with Mac or Microsoft Vista operating systems or with browsers such as Mozilla Firefox, Apple Safari, Camino, or Opera.

**Compatibility View Settings:** If you are using Internet Explorer® and experience difficulty in viewing the text in the IMLS Online Reviewer System, try adding [www.imls.gov](http://www.imls.gov) to Compatibility Views under “Tools.”

**Passwords:** There is no need to remember or rediscover a password you may have created in prior years. We reset all passwords for the IMLS Online Reviewer System to the default at the end of each review cycle, and so all reviewers must use the default to establish new accounts.

### 3. Assess Potential Conflicts of Interest

After you have created a new password, click **REVIEW GROUPS**, and your review assignment will appear. To access the list of applications assigned to you, click **VIEW**.

Read through your list of applications again to see if there are any potential conflicts of interest. Please see “[Complying With Ethical Obligations and Avoiding Conflicts of Interest](#).”

**CAUTION:** Depending on your computer’s operating system and/or the browser you use, you *may* see a screen with a column labeled “Conflicts” with a checkable box by each application. **Do not check any of these boxes** as doing so will disable access to the system and make it impossible for others in your review group to do their work. Instead, call or email your IMLS primary contact immediately if you have a conflict, or what may appear to be a conflict.

The screenshot shows the IMLS Online Reviewer System interface. At the top, there are links for Notices, Contact Us, and Help. Below this is the "Online Reviewer System" header. The left sidebar contains links for Reviewer Login, Review Groups, Reviewer App, My Online Account, and Log Off. The main content area is titled "Applications List" and "Conflict of Interest Statement". It contains instructions for reviewers to check for conflicts of interest. Below the instructions is a table with columns: Log Number, Application Title, Institution Name, Application Review Status, and Conflicts. The table lists several applications, each with a checkbox in the Conflicts column. A red arrow points to the "Conflicts" column header. At the bottom of the table, there is a "Conflict Comments" field and a "SUBMIT CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT" button. The footer includes links for MY ONLINE ACCOUNT and LOG OFF.

Log Number	Application Title	Institution Name	Application Review Status	Conflicts
M				<input type="checkbox"/> Details PRINT
M				<input type="checkbox"/> Details PRINT
M				<input type="checkbox"/> Details PRINT
M				<input type="checkbox"/> Details PRINT
M				<input type="checkbox"/> Details PRINT
M				<input type="checkbox"/> Details PRINT

If you have no conflicts of interest with any of the applicants on the list, click **SUBMIT CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT** at the bottom of page.

#### 4. Read Applications

Revisit the NLG guidelines at [http://www.imls.gov/applicants/2014\\_nlg\\_museums\\_guidelines.aspx](http://www.imls.gov/applicants/2014_nlg_museums_guidelines.aspx). Then read the applications assigned to you, keeping in mind the three panel review criteria: **Goals**, **Implementation**, and **Results**.

You may be reviewing applications in all three project categories: **Learning Experiences**, **Community Anchors**, and **Collections Stewardship**. Refer to the [NLG Program Overview](#) for a summary of the goals of each category. Below are the considerations that should guide your evaluations. You can access the [NLG Panel Review Criteria](#) as a separate document to keep handy as you read your applications.

#### Does the project meet the goals of NLG-Museums and the project category under which it was submitted?

The distinguishing features of NLG-Museums projects are broad impact, innovation, and collaboration. Exemplary projects:

- address a current need of the museum field
- advance practice in the museum profession
- demonstrate the potential for far-reaching impact
- strengthen museum services to benefit the audiences and communities being served
- reflect awareness and support of current strategic initiatives and agendas in the field
- align with the goals of the project category under which it was submitted:
  - *Learning Experiences*: IMLS places the learner at the center and supports engaging experiences in museums that prepare people to be full participants in their local communities and our global society. Projects should advance the museum field's ability to provide high-quality, inclusive, accessible and audience-focused learning opportunities; provide access to collections, information, and educational resources; encourage the use of technologies; and develop programs for specific segments of the public.
  - *Community Anchors*: IMLS promotes museums as strong community anchors that enhance civic engagement, cultural opportunities, and economic vitality. Projects should advance the museum field's ability to harness the expertise, knowledge, space, and/or other resources of museums in order to address specific community needs.
  - *Collections Stewardship*: IMLS supports exemplary stewardship of museum collections and promotes the use of technology to facilitate discovery of knowledge and cultural heritage. Projects should advance the museum field's ability to identify new solutions that address high priority and widespread collections care or conservation issues.

<b>Is the project poised for successful implementation?</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrates thorough understanding of relevant issues and current practices</li> <li>• Addresses an assessed need</li> <li>• Allocates resources for the successful completion of the project</li> <li>• Connects goals and objectives to appropriate activities and intended outcomes</li> </ul>
<b>If funded, will the project achieve its intended results?</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tracks, measures, and adapts in order to achieve desired outcomes</li> <li>• Generates continuing benefits for the museum field</li> </ul>
<b>Application Overview</b>
Share your overall impressions of the application and general comments that do not fall into one of the above categories. You will select a numeric score for the application in this section

## 5. Draft Comments

You must write a constructive and substantive comment for each of three criteria for each application you review.

To organize notes for writing your comments, you may wish to use the “[Panel Review Notes Template](#).” As you think about the review criteria, be sure to consider all the required components of the application as well as relevant Supporting Documents as resources for your evaluation. Draft your comments using a word-processing program for later copying and pasting into the IMLS Online Reviewer System. Remember that each comment must be between 30 and 2000 characters long.

When drafting your comments ...

- use your professional knowledge and experience to assess the information objectively.
- judge the application on its own merits, and do not base your evaluation on any prior knowledge of an institution.
- if you question the accuracy of any information, call us—not the applicant—to discuss it.

Effective comments ...	Poor comments...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• are presented in a constructive manner.</li> <li>• are specific, and easy to read and understand.</li> <li>• reflect the resources of the institution.</li> <li>• are specific to the individual application.</li> <li>• reflect the numeric score assigned.</li> <li>• reflect the application's strengths and identify areas for improvement.</li> <li>• are directed to applicants—not IMLS or panel reviewers—for their use.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• simply summarize or paraphrase the applicant's own words.</li> <li>• make derogatory remarks.</li> <li>• penalize an applicant because you feel the institution does not need the money.</li> <li>• offer or ask for irrelevant or extraneous information.</li> <li>• make vague or overly general statements.</li> <li>• question an applicant's honesty or integrity.</li> </ul>

***Make sure your comments justify the scores you provide. A highly complementary comment does not “remove the sting” of a low score, and a negative comment does not “even out” a high one. Comments and scores must complement each other and make sense as a whole.***

Below are some examples of **effective** panel reviewer comments:

Goals	
“You clearly identify a critical need within the museum field and propose an innovative solution. The project partners, particularly the State Education Officers, add needed expertise and have been involved in the development of the project. Your intended results are well reasoned, well formulated, achievable, and will provide the field with valuable information. The proposed project is an excellent fit for the NLG-Museums program, Learning Experiences category.”	<i>Comment is substantive, addresses the review criteria, and employs a positive tone.</i>
“You make a strong case for the museum to partner with the University to provide research expertise and the results clearly meet the needs of your target audience. However, I believe that the problem you identify is one based in your community rather than in the museum field, and does not meet the NLG-Museum program goals of demonstrating broad impact or using an innovative approach. This project more closely matches the goals of the Museums for America grant program and you may want to consider submitting an application to the MFA program in a future year. “	<i>Comment correlates with the score of 1 and makes implementable suggestions for securing funding.</i>
Implementation	
“Your work plan is clear and outlines specific activities necessary for achieving your goals. I like the series of low-cost experiments intended to provide a direction for more fleshed out versions of those that prove successful.  “You might consider adding a few iterations of each experiment to explore its potential for greater success rather than relying on the results from initial attempts.”	<i>Comment provides a constructive assessment of the application and suggestions likely to benefit the applicant.</i>
Results	
“Your evaluation plan is very thorough and well thought out. The online platform with results from these experiments, resources for duplication, and suggestions for scaling up will be extremely useful. I would have liked to see more robust plans for continuing the dissemination of your work beyond posting the results and resources on the website.”	<i>Comment addresses questions from the review criteria.</i>

In contrast, below are some examples of **poor** panel reviewer comments:

<b>Goals</b>	
"The museum plans to organize a series of experimental interactive education programs on the topic of income equity and evaluate them to determine which prove most successful in meeting their desired learning outcomes for their high school participants. They will share the results on a project website."	<i>Comment paraphrases the applicant's own words.</i>
<b>Implementation</b>	
"The work plan would be improved by putting in more time onsite."	<i>Comment is very brief and has little value to the applicant.</i>
"The design of this research study is wrong-headed and will not yield any useful data. The staff is woefully unprepared and will fail in the execution of this project. Targeting federal funds to this museum is a mistake."	<i>Comment is derogatory and does not provide useful feedback.</i>
<b>Results</b>	
"Strong results with very sustainable benefits."	<i>Comment is very brief and has little worth or value to the applicant.</i>

The chart below summarizes the most frequently asked questions from NLG reviewers:

<b>Should I consider ... ?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
An institution's financial or staffing needs		X
Whether the project is well planned and the organization has the appropriate resources to complete the project	X	
Whether the applicant has included the information necessary for an adequate evaluation of its merits	X	
Whether a project is new or a resubmission		X
The size or age of the organization		X
An institution's indirect cost rate		X

## 6. Assign Scores

Assign a single preliminary score to each application. Use a scale of 1 to 5, as described below.

<b>SCORE DEFINITIONS</b>	
<b>5 – Excellent</b>	The applicant's response is outstanding and provides exceptional support for the proposed project.
<b>4 – Very Good</b>	The applicant's response provides solid support for the proposed project.

<b>3 – Good</b>	The applicant’s response is adequate but could be strengthened in its support for the proposed project.
<b>2 – Some Merit</b>	The applicant’s response is flawed and does not adequately support the proposed project.
<b>1 – Inadequate/Insufficient</b>	The applicant’s response is inadequate or provides insufficient information to allow for a confident evaluation.

## 7. Review Your Work

Review your draft comments and preliminary scores. A review with a missing score or even one missing comment cannot be accepted by the IMLS Online Reviewer System. Adjust your scores, if necessary, to reflect more accurately your written evaluation. Scores should support comments, and comments should justify scores.

## 8. Enter Your Scores and Comments

Return to the IMLS Online Reviewer System at

<https://e-services.imls.gov/grantapps/reviewers.aspx>

Login with the email address you have on file with IMLS and the password you created in Step 2. Go to your list of assigned applications and click **REVIEW** beside any of them to begin.

Copy and paste your comments into the appropriate blue blocks for each section of the narrative for each application. Be sure to save each comment by clicking **SAVE** at the bottom of the page before you move on to the next one. After entering comments for all three review criteria, go to the **Application Overview** section and choose a numeric score between 1 and 5 from the **SCORE** dropdown menu. You must enter a summary comment in this section for the system to accept your score. Use the controls on the side or top of the screen to navigate between sections.

**NOTE:** “Funding Priorities Addressed” is not relevant. You may simply ignore the radio button.

Once you have completed assigning a score and providing comments for each application assigned to you, print a copy of each completed review to keep for your files. Then click on **I AM READY TO SUBMIT THIS REVIEW TO IMLS** to send all your work to IMLS.

At this point, you will not be able to re-enter the IMLS Online Reviewer System unless you notify your IMLS primary contact.

*For all questions about reviewing, either technical or programmatic, please call or email your IMLS primary contact directly.*

#### **9. Manage Your Copies**

Keep your applications and a copy of each review sheet until **September 30, 2014**, in case there are questions from IMLS staff. Continue to maintain confidentiality of all applications that you review by keeping electronic and paper copies in a secure place. After September 30, 2014, destroy the applications and the review sheets.